

Gary C Worrell

From: Gary C Worrell [gcw@igx.net]
Sent: 07 February, 2011 01:21
To: 'Gary C Worrell'
Subject: Postcard
Attachments: Hello.jpg; Map.gif; AjoMountainLoopSatellite.gif; OrganPipeCactus.jpg; SaguaroCactus.jpg; OcotilloCactusWithBlooms.jpg; SonoranDesert09.jpg; SonoranDesert12.jpg; SonoranDesert16.jpg; SonoranDesert26.jpg

Hello again (see image).

So with no work on Sunday, I took a road trip to the Organ Pipe Cactus National Monument, a US National Park in the Sonoran Desert. It's located in Southwest Arizona, along the Mexican Border (see map, GPS track in green). If it looks like it was a longer distance than it should have been, it's because you have to drive around the Barry M. Goldwater Air Force Bombing Range.

I left my hotel in San Diego at 3:45 AM knowing it was going to be quite a drive. I reached the National Park Visitor Center right at 10AM (At the California-Arizona border the time zone changes from Pacific to Mountain, so it was really 11AM when I got there, but I didn't bother to change my watch). The park has a 21 mile loop that winds through the Ajo Mountains (see satellite image) that the Park Service told me takes about two hours to complete. So I decided to put the car top down and give it a whirl (no pun intended). Fortunately for you, I had MustangConvertaCAM. Here is a 6 minute time-lapse clip of the loop, it was a bumpy ride for a car:

<http://igx.net/Video/SanDiegoCAM/20110206AjoMountainDriveLoop-HalfSec30FPS.mp4> (Apple/i)

<http://igx.net/Video/SanDiegoCAM/20110206AjoMountainDriveLoop-HalfSec30FPS.wmv> (Windows)

It starts and ends at the Park Visitor Center.

Organ Pipe Cactus (Merriam-Webster lists the unchanged "cactus" along with "cactuses" and "cacti" as plural variants, thank-you) are more common in the Mexican portion of the Sonoran Desert (which encompasses almost all of Baja California and the East bank of the Gulf of California), because the cactus doesn't survive frosts. But the southern portion of the US Sonoran Desert has an acceptable climate. Franklin D. Roosevelt established the park in 1937 to protect the Organ Pipe Cactus, probably at Eleanor's request.

More common is the Saguaro (sa-WAH-row) Cactus. They can grow as tall as 50 feet, weigh several tons, and live 200 years.

Then there are my favorite, the Ocotillo (oh-koh-TEE-yo) Cactus. They are more abundant further North in the Mohave, I was lucky to be in the Mohave in the Spring of 2005 after Southern California experienced record rains. The Ocotillo can grow leaves and flowers in a matter of hours when it gets water, then when the water dries up it sheds it's foliage and waits dormant for more water. Today I spotted one that still had some of its red flowers from a recent rain event.

In all it was a worthwhile trip, deserts are particularly interesting to me. Maybe it's because there aren't many people around. The 750 mile round trip took 14.5 hours to complete, and I passed through six US Border Patrol Checkpoints along the way. You could see the border fence from the highway around the California-Arizona border. And Interstate 8 in Arizona has a 75MPH speed limit. Go Arizona!

Cheers,
G.



















